

United States Department of Interior

**Bureau of Reclamation
Mid-Pacific Region
Sacramento, CA**

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

**TEMPORARY WATER ACQUISITION FROM STEVINSON WATER
DISTRICT FOR WILDLIFE REFUGES**

Prepared by:

Environmental Specialist

Recommended by:

Water Acquisition Program Manager

Concur:

Program Management Branch Chief

Approve:

Resources Management Division Chief

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There is a need to purchase water during the 2004, 2005 and 2006 water supply years to meet incremental Level 4 requirements to provide critical wetland habitats for the benefit of migratory waterfowl, other migratory birds, and wetland dependant wildlife. Reclamation is required to obtain incremental Level 4 water supplies pursuant to Section 3406(d)(2) of the CVPIA.. To meet CVPIA requirements, water supplies are to be acquired from willing sellers.

The proposed action consists of the Department of Interior (Interior) purchasing up to approximately 8,500 (+/- 10%) acre-feet of water from Stevinson Water District (District) to meet Level 4 refuge water needs for water service years 2004, 2005 and 2006. Under this proposal, the 8,500 acre-feet of water will be delivered to East Bear Creek Unit as Level 2 supplies for the refuge through an exchange to provide incremental Level 4 supplies to some other refuge(s). This exchange is permitted under Article 7 of the Long-Term Refuge Water Supply Contracts and will maintain the balance of Level 2 and Level 4 refuge water supplies consistent with the obligations to each refuge under the Long-Term Water Supply Contracts.

From spring 2004 to February 2007, the District will provide water to Reclamation through the implementation of a district water users groundwater substitution program and through the redirection of surface water supplies that have been historically locally acquired. Of the approximately 8,500 acre-feet total, up to 5,500 acre-feet of surface water historically transferred locally by the District will be redirected to the East Bear Creek Unit. Additionally, 3,000 acre-feet of water will be provided through the groundwater substitution program.

An Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared that evaluates the potential environmental impacts, both beneficial and adverse, associated with the Proposed Action and a No Action Alternative. The EA is attached for reference. In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended, Reclamation has found that the acquisition of water from Stevinson Water District for use on the San Joaquin Valley and Tulare Basin Refuges will not result in a significant adverse impact on the environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is based upon the following:

- This water is in surplus of Stevinson Water District's needs for the 2004 through 2006 water years. The water, if not purchased, would be delivered to other willing buyers. No changes in Delta pumping operations will occur with implementation of the Proposed Action.
- No changes in land use will occur as a result of the Proposed Action.

- The Proposed action will not affect any Federal or State-listed special status species.
- Cultural resources will not be affected due to the proposed action because no new land use changes or new construction will occur.
- The absence of Indian Trust Assets in areas affected by the water transfer precludes any impact.
- Minority or disadvantaged populations or communities will not be adversely impacted by the Proposed Action.
- The Proposed Action will not contribute to a cumulatively significant adverse impact when added to other past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions, given the relatively small amount of water involved and the short-term and temporary nature of the water acquisition.